



Fall 2011 issue

Maine Source

Tips and Talk About Raising Healthy Youth in Maine Township

Lock It Up!

While most kids don't use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs, by senior year in high school, almost 90 percent of Maine Township students say alcohol is very easy or easy to get.¹

And what's one of the most likely places they get that alcohol? Either from their own homes, with or without parents' knowledge, or the home of a friend.²

One of the simplest ways to reduce underage drinking is to reduce access to alcohol. To keep kids healthy, MCYAF urges parents to **Lock It Up!** Keep in mind "It" can be alcohol, the most widely used substance, but also includes prescription and over-the-counter drugs, all which are harmful to teens' bodies and safety when misused.

Hidden in Plain Sight

Parents and other adults (including grandparents) can take stock of various locations within their homes where kids can get hold of dangerous substances. Start with the refrigerator, kitchen and liquor cabinets for alcoholic beverages; bathroom and medicine cabinets for prescription and over-the-counter drugs; and other rooms for common household products that could be inhaled, such as glue, spray paint, cleaning fluids, or even Dust-Off®, Reddi Wip® and felt-tip markers.

- Is there a way to limit access to these items in your home?
- How can you monitor the supply?
- Can you lock the locations to deter use by young people who might be in your home when you're there -- and especially when you're absent?
- Would you know if alcohol is missing, whether whole bottles or cans of alcoholic beverages or portions transferred to another container (water bottle, etc.)?
- Are prescription drugs, such as painkillers and ADHD medications, cold and cough relief medicines, etc. kept away from children or teens and used only when prescribed?
- Are products such as chemical solvents, aerosol sprays and gases within easy reach of kids?

Answering these questions and surveying your home are good places to start when it comes to reducing substance use among our youth.

For a list of common inhalants, how they're used, signs and effects of abuse, see <http://www.drugfree.org/drug-guide/inhalants>.

^{1,2} Source: 2010 Illinois Youth Survey, N= 5473

The Des Plaines, Niles and Park Ridge Police Departments will hold a **Medication Take Back Day** on **Saturday, October 29th** from **10 a.m.—2 p.m.** Unwanted, unused and expired prescription or over-the-counter medications can be dropped off at any of the three police stations that day. A similar event was held in April, with more than 700 pounds of medicines collected.

Take the Pledge

Did you know hundreds of Maine Township parents take a voluntary pledge with their school to help prevent teen alcohol and drug use?

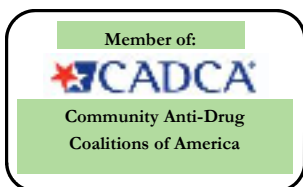


In the pledge, parents agree to:

- Supervise kids in their homes
- Not allow alcohol or drugs to knowingly be used by teens on their property
- Set clear no-use rules and enforce consequences, if needed, for their children's behavior
- Welcome calls from other parents
- Monitor their teens for where they are, who they're with and when they'll be home.

Parents play an important role in reducing kids' access to and use of alcohol and drugs. Tom S., a high school parent, says, "I sign the pledge every year because

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Guest Essay: Doing Things Differently

Being a parent is the hardest job in the world, and the media (television, Internet, etc.) has made our job even harder. I am the parent of three children. I assumed my two older kids knew underage drinking wasn't allowed in our home, or anywhere else for that matter.

And yet, I discovered that my two older kids drank while in high school. As their mother, I felt their poor judgment was my fault, but the fact is we were at fault as a family.

Yes, they made bad decisions, but I didn't inform them of our rules. I never sat them down, looked them in the eye and told them, "Rule #1 is drinking, smoking, and using drugs aren't allowed. Rule #2 is to call me anytime, anywhere before you get in a car with someone who's been drinking or using drugs. And if the rules are broken, these are the consequences—then spell them out."

But with my youngest child, I'm doing things differently. I had a very serious talk with my 8th grader that I never had with my older kids. I explained to her that I know she can make friends that don't drink, and I hope she chooses not to drink until she's at least 21 because it's illegal, unhealthy and dangerous.

I explained to her there are plenty of kids that don't drink or use drugs, and was clear about the consequences for breaking our rules. Believe me, I thought I knew a lot about kids, but I intend to be more watchful with my last child.

There were times I worried that the older two didn't like me, but now it doesn't matter if my younger daughter likes me. It's normal for teenagers not to like their parents sometimes. But I do hope she'll respect me and our family rules and choose not to drink or use drugs because her safety and health are most important. The rules are there because we love her and want to keep her safe.

Not MY Kid!



As parents, can we afford to sit back and say, "It's not MY KID who's drinking"?

True, most kids don't drink alcohol, but how can we continue to avoid the statistics? Of 1,205 Maine Township High School seniors surveyed on the 2010 Illinois Youth Survey, almost half – 48 percent — reported they drank alcohol in the past 30 days. And almost a third, 32 percent, said they engaged in binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a row, usually in less than two hours).

Let's look at the raw numbers to better understand our kids' behavior. Forty-eight percent (48%) of seniors who said they drank alcohol equates to 579 kids.

And thirty-two percent (32%) of 12th graders – or 386 -- said they had five or more drinks in a row at one time in the past two weeks.

That is hundreds of kids drinking alcohol, not a few sneaking a sip here or there. The trend among teens who drink is to consume as much alcohol as possible in as little time to get drunk.

Along with it being illegal to drink under 21, there are health risks to the developing teen brain which can be long-term and irreversible. Teens who regularly drink alcohol experience more academic problems and set themselves up for dependence or abuse of alcohol as adults as well.

Maybe it's time to admit that it **might** be MY KID that drinks and take steps to reduce that risk. And if you are lucky enough that it's not the kid who lives in the same house with you that drinks, he or she is someone else's child – possibly a friend of your son or daughter or a neighbor child.

What do you think about alcohol use and acceptance of underage drinking? Let us know. Weigh in at www.facebook.com/mcyaf.

Take the Pledge

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I want other parents to know that I won't allow kids – mine or theirs - to drink at my house, and it's a safe zone for them."

Laura M., whose daughter is 13, said after signing the pledge, she told her daughter that her friends are always welcome to hang out at their house but only when a parent is home.

Laura also calls when her daughter goes over a friend's house to make sure a parent will be there. She explained that their family rule is no drinking anywhere, anytime until she's at least 21, and what privileges she would lose if the rule is broken. "It's not a question of trust. It's about keeping her safe."

All Maine Township High Schools and some area middle schools and junior highs publish a Parent Pledge Directory. If your school does not yet have one, contact us at info@mcyaaf.com about how to get started.

